



First You Have to Have a Vision City of Ypsilanti, Michigan

Vision + Determination
Builds “Hipsilanti”

Ypsilanti = Hipsilanti

- Dr. Cheryl C. Farmer, Mayor
City of Ypsilanti
 - William D. Kinley, Owner
Phoenix Contractors, Inc. and Ypsilanti
Downtown Development Authority Member
 - Jennifer Albaum, Owner
henrietta fahrenheit
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Ypsilanti's Glorious Legacy



- History creates a unique diverse community
- Star-crossed paths of commerce – Huron River and Indian Trail
- The “Ypsilanti” Greek connection
- The Railroad

Ypsilanti's Rich Heritage



- Civil War and Underground Railroad
- The Normal School opens in 1857 – EMU
- Advent of auto industry by Henry Ford
- World War II – “Arsenal for Democracy”

Recent History of Neglect and Decline

- Neighborhood housing transitions to rental housing
 - The “mall of America” – storefront vacancies
 - Outward growth of the University
 - Growth in public housing/poverty/crime
 - Closing of Ypsilanti State Hospital adds to perception of danger
 - Public infrastructure deteriorates with no plan for improvement
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Downtown Business Decline



Downtown Business Decline



Visioning Together: Capitalize on the Positives

- Depot Town's mini-renaissance: artists as urban pioneers
 - Downtown Development Authority leadership on Hyett-Palma study in early 1990s
 - City Council leadership: Annual visioning sessions with City department heads initiated in 1996
 - Defined areas of agreement
 - Looked for root causes of decline and set plan for action
 - Review goals annually
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City Hall Sets the Example

- Building and infrastructure improvements
 - Reorganize departments for efficiency/customer service
 - Build culture of truthful communication/transparency
 - Commit to engaging the community
 - Strengthen building/development codes and enforcement
 - Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance updates
 - New Huron River Park Corridor Master Plan re-energizes Frederick Law Olmstead Plan
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Cool City Successes and Projects



- Historic Depot Town district
- Old Ypsi High School – senior apartment living
- Downtown revitalization
- West Cross Street plan
- Water Street neighborhood development

Depot Town District Thrives



Depot Town District Thrives



Senior Living in Old Ypsi High



Water Street: Downtown Living



Site Location

The Water Street Neighborhood Site consists of approximately 38.4 net acres. It is bordered on the north by Michigan Avenue, on the east by Park Street, and on the south and west by the Detroit River. It contains 28 separate parcels; 35 of which are privately owned with the remaining three publicly owned. One Property Identification Section for more information on each parcel. The site is less than a ten minute walk to both Downtown and Depot Town.



**WATER
STREET**

A Planned Unit Development February 20, 2002

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Water Street: Downtown Living



Concept Plan: Detail

Residential

4 x 26	296 units
3 x 26	80 units
3 x 26	120 units
3 x 26	83 units
Back-to-Back Townhomes	126 units
Townhomes	131 units
Stacked Flats	76 units
Four-Flows	20 units

Total Number of Units: 872 units

Commercial

- 1 Restaurant Pad
- Opportunity to convert residential units along Michigan Avenue to Retail/Office

Open Space

- River's Edge Park 7.1 Acres
- Internal Open Space 1.45 Acres

Total Open Space: 8.55 Acres



**WATER
STREET**

A Planned Unit Development February 26, 2002

Water Street: Downtown Living



The Water Street Design Charrette, January 26 - February 1, 2002

The Development Strategy also outlined the objectives and design philosophy in an illustrative concept plan. Similar to the Huron River Corridor Master Plan, the Water Street Development Strategy addressed the City's goals for a revitalized, attractive, urban neighborhood with the potential to encourage new, significant investment and growth in the entire Downtown area. In 2001 the City used the Development Strategy and its accompanying concept plan as the basis for issuing a Request For Qualification for developers interested in partnering with the City in redeveloping the Water Street site.

In November of 2001, after a long and careful selection process, Siltmore Properties Corporation was selected as the Water Street "Preferred Developer." Working diligently with the City as a true public-private partnership over the several months following the City's selection, a design charrette was held in late January of 2002, taking the Development Strategy and its concept plan to a higher level of detail.

Design Charrette

The term "charrette" derives from the French term for "little cart" and refers to the final intense work effort expended by architects to meet a project deadline. At the École de Beaux Arts in Paris during the 19th century, professors circulated with little carts to collect final drawings, and students would jump on the charrette to put finishing touches on their presentations minutes before their deadline.

A charrette provides a forum for ideas and offers the unique advantage of giving immediate feedback to designers while giving mutual ownership to the plan by all those who participate.

The Water Street charrette was specifically organized to encourage participation by everyone interested in the making of the Water Street neighborhood, so that all factions were represented including governmental, developmental and the general public.



WATER STREET

A Planned Unit Development February 20, 2002

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Ypsilanti Downtown: Evolution of a Business District

- **The Heyday** 1940 to 1960
Thriving area industry
 - **The Long Slide** 1960 to 1980
Malls arrive, social services develop
 - **The Seeds of Renewal** 1980 to 1990
Business owners and City team up
 - **The Mood Change** 1990 to 2000
Public investment spurs private investment
 - **The Acceleration** 2000 to Present
Private investment spurs public investment
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Public Efforts and Funding

- Formed Downtown Development Authority and Tax Increment Financing District
 - Adopted Main Street program
 - Encouraged and funded commercial façade improvements
 - Commissioned Hyett-Palma Study for downtown redevelopment
 - Purchased Masonic Temple building and adjacent lot
 - Supported Riverside Arts Center development in Masonic Temple
 - Installed streetscape improvements
 - Installed Michigan Avenue boulevard
 - Committed to development of Water Street area
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Former Masonic Temple



Michigan Avenue Streetscape



Water Street Redevelopment

The Mews

This small character area is situated in the northwest portion of the Water Street neighborhood. The Mews acts as a pedestrian street that extends off of Michigan Avenue and has a smaller extension that leads back toward the river. The homes along the Mews front the pedestrian walks with inviting porches and garden spaces.



**WATER
STREET**

A Planned Unit Development February 25, 2002

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Water Street Redevelopment

Proposed Water Street Build-Out



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Private Efforts and Funding

- Property owners form DDA with City
 - 2 mill operating funding for downtown supported
 - Commercial building facades are improved
 - Volunteers form Riverside Arts Center and commit to long-term support
 - Building renovation/reuse investment begins
 - Retail/entertainment businesses open in downtown
 - Biltmore Properties commits to Water Street project
 - Purchase/plans accelerate for loft/business reuse
-

Private Redevelopment Efforts



New Business Growth



New Business Growth



New Business Growth



New Business Growth



Residential Loft Living



Residential Loft Living



Arts & Entertainment Districts: The Arts

- **Hyett-Palma Downtown Study – Guides Efforts**
 - **Riverside Arts Center – Community Arts Venue**
 - Formed by private initiative with public support
 - Funded by public and private sources
 - Intended as multi-arts economic attractor
 - Operates with committed volunteers as non-profit organization
 - Theater user groups formed in response to availability
 - Year-round generator of downtown activity by patrons/users
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Riverside Arts Center



Riverside Arts Center Plaza



Riverside Arts Center: Club Level



Arts & Entertainment: Entertainment and Nightlife

- Seven bar/music/show venues along Washington Street
 - Evening foot traffic very high
 - Businesses successful and expanding
 - Customer demographics: 21 to 34 age group
 - Downtown builds reputation as nightlife destination
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Entertainment/Nightlife



Entertainment/Nightlife



Entertainment/Nightlife



Ypsilanti Today: Are We Cool Yet?



- **Changing Perceptions**
 - Residential desirability
 - Business potential
- **Geographic Necessity**
 - Expansion from all directions
 - Transportation ease
- **Economic Reality**
 - Moderate real estate costs
 - Limited municipal funds

Ypsilanti Today: Signs of Coolness



- Appeal to 21-35 ages
- Arts and entertainment venues
- Tech-related job creation
- Relative affordability
- “THERE’S A CHILL IN THE AIR”

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- A creative business venture
- Supporting community
 - designers
 - customers
 - artists/musicians
 - other businesses

Supporting Community: The Designers



- Collection of independent designers
- DIY ethic includes network and support
- Portland, Maine to Portland, Oregon

Supporting Community: The Designers



Supporting Community: The Customers



- It's a VIBE, a MENTALITY
 - Exploration
adventure
discovery
 - Support and respect
-

Supporting Community: The Customers



Supporting Community: Artists and Musicians



- Local artists' work on display
- Sponsorship of music events/festivals
- Sell fee-free tickets to concerts

Supporting Community: Other Businesses

- Mentoring and practical support
 - Connect and form relationships
 - Offer/return generosity
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Why Ypsilanti?



- Customer population untapped/virtually ignored
 - City and surrounding townships
 - University population
 - Other area downtowns developed
- Beyond the obvious
 - Offers the unexpected
 - Burgeoning creative scene
 - Open, supportive community

What Can You Take Back to Your Communities?



- Micro level – Businesses
 - dynamic merchant's association
 - Local level – City Officials
 - regulations that reinforce the vision
 - All levels – Designers, Planners, Merchants, Officials
 - Push the edge
 - “Cool” = Unique
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Ypsilanti = Hipsilanti

- For more information contact:

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